

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 241645Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7055

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 1006

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MO, JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN F-5A'S TO MOROCCO

REF: (A) AMMAN 963, (B) RABAT 1021

1. REFTELS ARE SOBERING VIEWS OF THE F-5A/F-5E PROPOSAL NOW THAT GOJ AND GOM UNDERSTAND BETTER WHAT OTHER HAS IN MIND, THE INITIAL BURSTS OF ENTHUSIASM ARE WEARING THIN, AND ALL CONCERNED CAN LOOK AT THE MORE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRANSFER.

2. FOR YOUR BACKGROUND AND FINFORMATION: OUR OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE POSITION HERE IS THAT F-5A ASPECT OF ARRANGEMENT IS LIKELY TO FALL THROUGH UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS (I.E. NO ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT), OR AT LEAST RESULT IN DELIVERY OF FEWER THAN 20 AIRCRAFT. WE DOUBT THAT THERE WILL BE ANY RECRIMINATIONS, AT LEAST FROM GOJ, THAT WILL BE DIRECTED AGAINST USG. WE HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID ANY ROLE HERE OTHER THAN ONE OF HELPFULNESS.

3. WHILE GOJ WILL FULLY COMPREHEND MOROCCO'S RETICENCE TO FURNISH F-5E'S ONE-FOR-ONE FOR F-5A'S, AT THE SAME TIME EVEN THAT OVERWHELMING DEAL IS BOUND TO RUN INTO STIFF OPPOSITION HERE BECAUSE OF SITUATION IN RJAF. THE BENEFITS TO JORDAN ARE ABVIOUS. NOT SO

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OBVIOUS ARE THE NUMEROUS ADVERSE FACTORS.

4. SUPPORT FOR MOROCCO, WHETHER IN HARDWARE OR PERSONNEL, WILL NOT BE POPULAR GENERALLY, AND WITH THE MILITARY IN PARTICULAR, ALTHOUGH THEY WILL PROBABLY, AS IN THE PAST, ACCEDE TO KING'S POLICY DICTATES. OTHER THAN POSSIBLY BY THE KING AND PRIME MINISTER AND A LIMITED CIRCLE AROUND HIM, MOROCCO AND KING HASAN ARE NOT CONSIDERED SPECIAL FRIENDS OF JORDAN. FROM HIGH RANKING MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE KNOW, THE LINE GOES: WHAT DID MOROCCO EVER DO FOR US? KING HASSAN WAS WAY OUT FRONT IN SCREWING JORDAN AT THE RABAT CONFERENCE. WHY SHOULD WE GET IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN SQUABBLE? WHAT CAN WE POSSIBLY GAIN? OVERALL, WE WOULD EXPECT THE REACTION TO SUPPORT OF MOROCCO TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE ADVERSE TO THAT EXPERIENCED DURING JORDAN'S COMBAT SUPPORT OF OMAN LAST YEAR. IF ANY COMBAT CASUALTIES WERE EXPERIENCED, I.E. PILOTS, THE SITUATION WOULD GET ESPECIALLY TIGHT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT ADVISABLE TO ENCOURAGE JORDANIAN PILOT PARTICIPATION IN MOROCCO FOR THAT REASON. CHIEF OF AIR FORCE SAYS HE HAS TAKEN A STRONG STAND AGAINST THE KING IN THIS REGARD.#

5. THERE IS ALSO SOME POSSIBILITY THAT TRANSFER OF 20 F-5A AIRCRAFT AT THIS TIME COULD RESULT IN A WIDE DISAFFECTION IN AIR FORCE FROM THE COMMANDER ON DOWN. THIS SITUATION COULD POSSIBLY SPILL OVER TO THE ARMY, WHICH IS GRUNBLING OVER THE SYRIAN CONNECTION (PARTICULARLY MILITARY COORDINATION) AND LOWPAY IN LIGHT OF RECENT \$12/MONTH PAY RAISE WHICH IS CONSIDERED PALTRY.

6. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE IN-COUNTRY PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED, IN THAT A MINIMUM OF A 20-AIRCRAFT SQUADRON IS REQUIRED IN COUNTRY TO SUPPORT JORDAN'S OWN F-5E PROGRAM. AFTER THE TRANSFER, THERE IS NO WAY THAT JORDAN COULD FURNISH THE PILOTS NEEDED FOR THEIR SCHEDULED F-5E ACQUISITIONS, PLUS THE F-5E'S TO BE DELIVERED, SHOULD MOROCCO ACTUALLY AGREE, IN 1977.

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RESULT WOULD BE MANY US AIRCRAFT IN COUNTRY WITHOUT PILOTS AND SITUATION ABOUT WHICH WE (AND EVENTUALLY KING) WOULD NOT BE HAPPY, ESPECIALLY SINCE JORDAN IS STILL A CONFRONTATION STATE AND ARABS EYEBROWS IN THE AREA WILL BE RAISED AT THIS GESTURE OF REDUCING JORDAN'S OWN STRENGTH.

7. IF TRANSFER IS EFFECTED, IT WILL IMPACT HEAVILY ON JORDAN'S CAPABILITY TO POSE A DETERRENT TO ITS

UNCERTAIN NEIGHBORS DURING THE PERIOD 1976-1978. OVER AND ABOVE THIS HARDWARE LOSS AND IMPACT ON ABILITY TO ABSORB NEW AIRCRAFT IN FUTURE, THE TRANSFER WOULD TAKE A TOLL IN MORALE AND TRAINING WITHIN THE AIR FORCE.

8. WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON RABAT'S CABLE (REFTEL B). WE AGREE ENTIRELY WITH INFORMATION IN PARA 1, BUT BELIEVE THAT JORDAN WOULD BE LOATHE TO TURN OVER 20 AIRCRAFT WITHOUT COMPENSATION. COMPENSATION MOST DESIRED IS NOT MONETARY BUT NEW F-5E'S.

9. IN REGARD TO PARA 2, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR INTERESTS LIE IN FACILITATING AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH SUITS LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES IF INDEED THAT IS STILL POSSIBLE. FROM HERE IT IS HARD TO SAY WHICH OPTIONS MIGHT HELP TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. JORDANIANS MIGHT BE ABLE TO SPARE A SMALLER NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT IN ORDER TO MEET THEIR OWN TRAINING NEEDS AND QUITE POSSIBLY BE WILLING TO DO SO ON THE BASIS OF A SMALLER NUMBER OF F-5E'S TO REPLACE THOSE AIRCRAFT. WE ARE NOT OPPOSED TO HELPING GUIDE ARRANGEMENT, BUT FEEL THAT MOROCCANS AND JORDANIANS IN LONG RUN SHOULD BEGIN THE WORKING OUT PROCESS WITH US ON THE SIDELINES. OTHERWISE THE POTENTIAL FOR BLOW BACK ON US IS ENORMOUS; THE VALUE TO US IN JORDAN SPECIFICALLY IS IN FACILITATING THIS ARRANGEMENT OR LATERALLY IN DIRECTING IT IN WAYS THAT MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF BOTH PARTIES, BUT TOO MUCH GUIDANCE COULD BE FATAL. A KEY QUESTION FOR US IS WHAT NUMBER OF F-5A'S THE MOROCCANS COULD ACTUALLY ABSORB.

10. EMBASSY RABAT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR A LOAN OF 20 F-5A'S ON
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MUTUALLY AGREEABLE TERMS MAY BE REASONABLE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF RABAT, BUT JORDANIANS WOULD PROBABLY HOLD OUT FOR SHIPMENT OF SOME F-5E'S IN RETURN. JORDAN MILITARY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TRANSFER OF AIRCRAFT NOW AND EITHER LOAN OR GRANT ARRANGEMENT WOULD TAKE THEM FROM AN ACTIVE AND ON-GOING TRAINING

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7056

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 1006

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PROGRAM OF INTRINSIC LONG-TERM IMPORTANCE TO RJAF. THEREFORE ANY DEAL WHICH DID NOT CARRY IMMEDIATE RECEIPT OF SOME ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT TO SUPPORT THE ON-GOING PROGRAM HERE ABOVE A MINIMAL NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT WOULD POSSIBLY BE DIFFICULT AND DAMAGING TO THE TRAINING PROGRAM AND ARMED FORCES MORALE. WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN JORDANIANS TRANSFER MORE THAN 10 OF THE EXISTING F-5A'S THEY WILL BE CUTTING INTO THESE TRAINING PROGRAMS. AS NOTED ABOVE, KING IS TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF TRANSFERRING PILOTS BUT HAS GOTTEN A VERY STRONG NEGATIVE FROM HIS FORCES. THIS IS IMPORTANT, BUT NOT NECESSARILY CONTROLLING ON KING'S VIEW, BUT IT WILL CERTAINLY NOT GO DOWN WELL WITH JORDANIAN MILITARY.

11. FROM HERE WE DO NOT SEE HOW A LOAN, AS OPPOSED TO A GRANT, BOTH OF WHICH WE WOULD ASSUME WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THIRD PARTY TRANSFER ASSURANCES, WOULD CHANGE THE US OR ARAB PERCEPTION OF THE DEAL. WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW ARRANGEMENTS FOR A LOAN WOULD DIFFER FROM A GRANT SINCE THERE WOULD BE A TRANSFER OF "CONTROL" WHICH IN OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THE OPERATIVE SECTION OF THE LAW. FURTHER, SINCE JORDANIAN F-5A'S ARE FMS AIRCRAFT GIVEN BY IRAN, WE ASSUME THERE WOULD BE NO PURCHASE OF RESIDUAL RIGHTS. WE BELIEVE OUR COMMENTS ABOVE ALSO APPLY TO PARA 3 D BUT RECOGNIZE THAT IS FOR DEPARTMENT TO WORK OUT.

12. WE ARE PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL FOR JUDGMENTS IN
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PARA 4 REFTEL (B). WITH THE LIMITATIONS ON PILOTS, WE BELIEVE TRANSFER OF AS MANY AS 20-25 AIRCRAFT RIGHT NOW WOULD PROBABLY BE MISGUIDED ON THE PART OF BOTH MOROCCO AND

JORDAN. WHILE WE HAVE NOT HAD DIRECT EXPERIENCE WITH A SUPPLY-SUPPORT ARRANGEMENT, GOJ HAS BEEN URGENTLY NEGOTIATING ONE FOR SIX MONTHS AND IT HAS DONE LITTLE IF ANYTHING TO ALLEVIATE THE MASSIVE SPARE PARTS PROBLEMS WE HAVE HAD HERE WITH F-5A. RJAF HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY AGGRESSIVE AND SUCCESSFUL IN SEEKING SPARES FOR THEIR OWN F-5A'S FROM US, IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER POINTS OF THE COMPASS. IN SUM IT WOULD APPEAR THAT A MAJOR QUESTION IS THE NUMBER OF F-5A'S THAT CAN BE EFFECTIVELY ABSORBED IN SHORT ORDER IN MOROCCO AND EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED THEREAFTER. WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL FROM HERE FOR SOME IDEA OF THE NUMBER, WHETHER BASED ON A PILOT, MAINTENANCE OR AGE/SPARES SITUATION OR OTHER LIMITING FACTORS. AT THE PRESENT TIME WE BELIEVE THAT POSSIBLY UP TO 10 F-5A'S COULD BE SPARED AND THERE IS A CONSIDERATION OF AN ADDITIONAL FIVE FROM IRAN.

13. WE ALSO ASSUME THAT RABAT AND DEPARTMENT WOULD AGREE WITH US THAT IT WOULD BE POINTLESS AT THE PRESENT TIME, WHATEVER THE RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENTS, TO TRANSFER AIRCRAFT TO MOROCCO THAT WOULD DO LITTLE MORE THAN PROVIDE TARGET PRACTICE FOR THE ALGERIANS IN ANY POTENTIAL FUTURE ATTACK ON MOROCCAN AIR FIELDS. ASSUMING THEN THAT THE MOST REALISTIC FIGURE IS IN THE 10-15 AIRCRAFT RANGE, WE WOULD NOT BE OPPOSED TO PROVIDING THIS INFORMATION TO PRIME MINISTER RIFAI AND THE KING SHOULD DEPARTMENT AGREE. THIS MIGHT ALSO HELP IN UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOROCCANS HERE FOR REPLACEMENT. DOING SO WOULD HELP TO LESSEN SOME OF THE ADVERSE IMPACTS NOTED ABOVE AND WOULD PERMIT THE JORDANIANS AND MOROCCANS TO NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY ABOUT REPLACEMENT, LOAN, OR PAYMENT AS SEEMED MOST FEASIBLE TO THEM. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT JORDANIANS WOULD IN THE LONG RUN BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT SOMETHING LIKE A TWO-FOR-ONE EXCHANGE (F-5E'S FOR F-5A'S) GIVEN THE ENORMOUS PRICE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN F-5A'S AND F-5E'S. IT IS ALSO NOT
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IMPOSSIBLE, GIVEN KING HUSSEIN'S ESSENTIALLY GENEROUS NATURE, THAT A SMALLER NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT COULD BE OBTAINED AS AN OUTRIGHT GIFT, OR ON A LOAN BASIS.

14. UP UNTIL NOW WE HAVE PREFERRED KEEPING A LOW PROFILE, LETTING JORDANIANS AND MOROCCANS WORK OUT THE DETAILS OF A DEAL THEMSELVES. WHILE A SUGGESTION AT THE TOP HERE ABOUT THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF PLANES THAT COULD BE REASONABLY ABSORBED COULD BE MADE, TOO MUCH PUSHING ONE WAY OR THE OTHER RISKS LEAVING OURSELVES

OPEN TO BECOMING THE FALL GUY AS EMBASSY RABAT CORRECTLY POINTS OUT AND WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD ONLY BE DONE IF IT SERVES VERY IMPORTANT US INTERESTS IN MOROCCO.

15. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) DEPARTMENT REACTION TO SUGGESTIONS FROM RABAT AND AMMAN ON THE FUTURE OF THE DEAL; (B) SPECIFICALLY, THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT WHICH MOROCCO MIGHT ABSORB IMMEDIATELY GIVEN SHORTAGE OF PILOTS AND SPARE PARTS; AND (C) REACTION TO RABAT AND AMMAN'S SUGGESTION THAT WE GET SLIGHTLY MORE INVOLVED IN THE DEAL, INCLUDING SUGGESTION FROM HERE THAT WE MIGHT NOW APPROACH PRIME MINISTER OR KING ON LIMITATIONS ON NUMBER RELATED TO MOROCCO'S ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY. (D) SUGGEST DEPARTMENT NOT BEGIN PROCESS OF SEEKING CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL F-5A TRANSFER UNTIL ARRANGEMENTS ON REPLACEMENTS AND METHOD OF TRANSFER FULLY WORKED OUT BY JORDAN AND MOROCCO TO AVOID ANY UNNECESSARY ADVERSE PUBLICITY.
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